

SECTION C

DESCRIPTION/SPECIFICATIONS/AND WORK STATEMENT

I. BACKGROUND

As one of the nation's principal conservation agencies, the National Park Service (NPS) has the responsibility to protect some of our most treasured natural and historic resources. This responsibility includes the management of nearly 400 parks, which include over 83 million acres visited annually by some 275 million people from around the world. These visitors travel along 8,000 miles of roads and 14,000 miles of trails to reach a variety of destinations including campgrounds, visitor centers, lodges, historic buildings, and natural landmarks. To care for these visitors and these special places, it is essential that the NPS communicate effectively in the parks it manages.

Signs are the most frequently used means by which the NPS communicates with park visitors. Entrance signs offer greetings, welcoming visitors and reminding them that the place they are entering is part of a system of parks cared for by the NPS. Other signs guide visitors as they travel to or within parks, informing them of potential dangers, helping them to understand and appreciate what they encounter, reminding them of their roles in caring for parks, directing them to various events and facilities, and helping them have convenient and pleasant stays.

The NPS sign program is managed by the NPS Harpers Ferry Center located in Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. The Center's services are provided to 391 parks that are organized into seven regions. These services primarily support the development of interpretive media but also include the planning and design of park signs.

The purpose of the program is to provide signs that offer clear, concise, and consistent communications to park visitors; and

1. Maximize the public's convenience and safety and reduce the agency's liability exposure by ensuring compliance with pertinent federal regulations and principles of sound engineering and communications.
2. Strengthen the agency's public identity and its image as a single organization by reflecting current NPS graphic design standards and honoring the agency's commitment to rely more on standardized design.
3. Are appropriate in appearance, size, and material to a wide range of park environments, and are consistent with NPS design traditions.
4. Are easy to acquire, durable, and reasonably priced.

Historically, the NPS relied on various standards to direct the design, fabrication, and installation of its signs. Currently most signs in parks reflect standards that were developed in the 1970s for motorist guidance signs. These standards (which prescribed rounded corners, white typography on a brown background, and the use of a modified Clarendon typeface) did not address the full range of signs that are typically needed in parks. For this, and other reasons, signs in many parks today do not meet the needs of park manager or park visitors. Although there are examples of notable signs in some parks, NPS signage does not generally reflect the quality and consistency that such an important communication medium should provide. Many parks continue to have signs of mixed design and quality, that do not communicate effectively, that deteriorate quickly, and that do little to create a consistent agency identity.

To address this concern, the National Park Service created new sign standards and established a program to manage their Servicewide use. This initiative, as outlined in NPS Director's Order 52C: Park signs, which is contained in Attachment E, provides guidelines for the planning and design of a wide range of signs typically used in -- or leading to -- national parks. The standards address three specific types of signs: Motorist Guidance and Traffic Regulatory; Park and Facility Identification; and Visitor Information (signs relating to pedestrian wayfinding, park regulations and safety, interpretation, resource protection, and general information). The NPS sign standards are generally consistent with federal standards as published in the Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). Exceptions to the MUTCD have been approved by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) through a memorandum of understanding with the NPS.

II. **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the servicewide contracts are to provide national parks with sign planning and design services that supplement and complement those offered by the Harpers Ferry Center, and that are consistent with the standards that the Center has established and maintains.

III. **SCOPE OF WORK**

Independently, and not as an agent of the government, the contractor shall provide all labor, materials, equipment, facilities, and travel (except as otherwise specified in this contract), necessary to plan and design signs in or leading to national parks. The work also includes the custom design of signs that do not strictly conform to existing NPS standards, but reflect the intent of the standards and satisfy the needs of the agency and parks as determined by program and park managers. Although some of the signs planned and designed under the contract(s) include interpretive content, the contract does not include the planning and design of signs whose primary purpose is to provide interpretive information to visitors.

All work performed under this contract will be directed by the issuance of task orders in accordance with procedures outlined in Section G. In no event will the Government be responsible for any work performed by the Contractor that is not undertaken pursuant to a task order authorized by the Contracting Officer.

All work under this contract shall be performed as follows and in accordance with the Contractor's Comprehensive Plan dated May 11, 2009 and with the items listed in Section J, List of Documents, Exhibits and Other Attachments.

A. **Master Plan**

Services performed under the contract(s) may focus on the planning and design of a single sign or a small set of signs. The success of park signs is more assured if they are not developed individually or a few at a time, but are the result of a broad, deliberate, and well-documented sign communication strategy developed for an entire park or for significant areas within a park. This "signing strategy" is defined and documented by a comprehensive "Master Plan" which is the primary product delivered under the contract(s).

On occasion, a complete Master Plan, which includes all the elements described below, will be required. On other occasions, single elements or selected groups will be specified. What is needed on a particular project depends on the size and complexity of the area being considered and the type and number of signs being planned.

B. **Inventory**

The planning process often begins by evaluating and documenting the signs that are currently in place. The evaluation includes a sign's physical condition as well as its content to determine if the information displayed is correct and current. The documentation usually includes a digital photograph of the sign, a sketch indicating the sign's size and height above grade, the sign's location (a description and GPS coordinates), its type (Identification / Motorist Guidance / Traffic Regulatory / Visitor Information), and notes about its condition, function, and/or context (e.g., "Text too small for posted speed of 55MPH / location OK / sign panel faded"). The location of all existing signs that have been inventoried is indicated on a simple map of the park or park area being planned and is associated with information about it by a number code. Attachment F contains an inventory sample.

C. **Assessment**

The assessment of a park's existing signs is crucial to establishing its future needs. If, for example, most signs are communicating effectively, but are in poor physical condition, there may simply be a need to replace them with ones that comply with current NPS and Federal Highway Administration standards. If, on the other hand, a park's signs are not communicating with visitors effectively, existing signs may need to be replaced with newer ones, with more current information, and additional signs may need to be added. Recommendations about which signs should remain and what signs should be added are documented in a general narrative and on a map. The assessment may also include an examination of current or anticipated vehicle and/or pedestrian use patterns in order. It may also include preliminary sign design proposals aimed at determining how much NPS standards can be employed and how much custom design might be required. Attachment F contains an assessment sample.

D. **Sign Plan**

Once an Assessment, and perhaps an Inventory, has been completed and approved by the park and NPS sign program managers, a Sign Plan will be created to guide the fabrication and installation of the signs needed. It is critical that the Sign Plan be well-detailed, accurate, and complete as it will be the primary component of work accomplished later by a different, or several different, contractors. A Sign Plan, which is shown in Attachment G, includes the following:

1. **Sign Demolition Plan**

The location of all signs that are recommended for removal is indicated on a simple map of the park or park area being planned. Each sign slated for demolition is associated with information about it recorded during the Inventory.

2. **Sign Location Plan**

The location of all new signs that are proposed, those that replace existing signs and those that are altogether new, is indicated on a simple map of the park or park area being planned. Each sign designated on the map is associated with a drawing of it and written specifications relating to its construction.

3. **Sign Drawings**

Every new sign proposed is documented in a drawing. The drawings depict the size and general appearance of the sign, including the precise placement of all the text or other graphic content it displays, and the type of structure that supports the sign panel. Dimensions and notations on the drawing describe how the sign is to be made, including all materials and colors, or a reference is provided to standard construction details included elsewhere in the Sign Plan. The Sign Drawings also include information about how the sign is to be installed.

E. **Quality Assurance**

In addition to planning and design services, the contractor may be required to conduct inspections and provide consultation to ensure that signs are manufactured and/or installed as specified in the Sign Plan. Such services include:

1. Inspection of shop drawings created by sign manufacturers to ensure accuracy and conformity to Design Drawings;
2. Inspection of signs during manufacture to ensure compliance with shop drawings and general quality of materials and workmanship;
3. Assistance to parks in obtaining permits from state and municipal authorities to allow installation of signs as proposed;
4. Consultation with parks or to other contractors to ensure that signs are installed where, and as, intended; and
5. Inspection of installed signs to develop “punch list” of needed repairs and corrections.